

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 735
By Jackson

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of William M. Slayden, II,
Colonel, United States Army, Retired of Waverly.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of William M. Slayden, II, Colonel, United States Army, Retired; and

WHEREAS, our nation was conceived by individuals who were willing to sacrifice their personal safety and concerns to ensure our individual and collective freedom, and the Volunteer State is especially proud to recognize the valiant men and women who have performed above and beyond the call of duty; and

WHEREAS, Col. Slayden was one such courageous Tennessean who served with distinction in World War II as one of those great Americans who earned the rightful designation of the "greatest generation"; and

WHEREAS, this gallant man was born on April 9, 1911, in Waverly to John Alvin and Violetta Weems Slayden; he attended Waverly Central High School and the University of Tennessee, where he completed a bachelor's degree in 1932; and

WHEREAS, as an undergraduate, he displayed his numerous talents and natural leadership, becoming well known as a cartoonist with characters such as Tommy Teadance and Lib Date, participating in Sigma Nu Fraternity, and serving as Editor of the *MUGWAMP* humor magazine and the *Orange and White* weekly newspaper, President of the inter-fraternity council and his graduating class of '32, and a Torchbearer; and

WHEREAS, this brilliant gentleman continued his education at Cumberland University, where he earned a law degree; and

WHEREAS, after practicing law for a short time, he served with acumen and alacrity with the Tennessee Emergency Relief Administration and the Tennessee Valley Authority; and

WHEREAS, when war broke out in Europe, William M. Slayden answered his nation's call when he was activated as a member of the U.S. Army Reserve and called to duty in early 1940 with the War Department General Staff in Washington, D.C.; and

WHEREAS, after the United States entered the war, he quickly rose through the ranks while serving as an instructor at the Command and General Staff College; in February of 1944, Lt. Col. Slayden traveled to London to assist in the preparations for Operation Overlord, the invasion of France; and

WHEREAS, after crossing Omaha Beach and participating in the remarkable success of D-Day, he served as a G-2 staff officer of the VIII Corps with the ground forces of the First and Third Armies across France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Germany; and

WHEREAS, he ascended into American military lore at St. Vith during the Battle of the Bulge; while on special assignment with the 106th Infantry Division, he was cut off by the German offensive but rallied "Task Force Slayden" to hold off the Nazi onslaught; and

WHEREAS, the many decorations accumulated by William Slayden included the Legion of Merit with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Army Commendation medal, two Bronze Stars for Valor, two Bronze Stars for Merit, and the USSR Medal for Valor and Defense of the Fatherland; and

WHEREAS, Lt. Col. Slayden possessed the ability to succeed in any area of life, yet he made the admirable decision at the conclusion of the war to accept a commission in the regular army and devote his considerable talent to the promoting the welfare of the United States and our world; and

WHEREAS, an even more momentous decision bore fruit on February 9, 1946, when he joined the late Beth Merrick in holy matrimony in the chapel at Ft. Leavenworth; and

WHEREAS, through the years, the couple would develop a deep and special love while serving in Budapest, Frankfurt, Heidelberg, Ft. Meade, the Pentagon, Ft. Knox, Saigon, Ft. Monroe, Schofield Barracks, and Ft. DeRussy; and

WHEREAS, Col. Slayden took a well deserved retirement on May 31, 1966 as professor of Military Science and head of the Military Department of the University of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, after retirement, he continued his service to the public by accepting an appointment from Governor Ellington to be Deputy Commissioner of Conservation for the State

of Tennessee and also serving as the Governor's representative to the Public Land Law Review Commission and an Executive Reservist in the Executive Office of the President; and

WHEREAS, he was active in numerous civic and community organizations, including the University of Tennessee Alumni Association, Knoxville Civitan Club, Tennessee Society of Sons of the Revolution, Cherokee Country Club, East Tennessee Foundation Board of Directors, Exchange Club, American Legion, G.H. Weems Educational Fund Board of Trustees, and the Humphreys County Museum, of which he was a founder and principal supporter; and

WHEREAS, this fallen hero will be dearly missed by his daughter Dr. Suzanne Weems Slayden, son William M. Slayden, III, daughter-in-law Cheryl Bradford Slayden, and three grandchildren, W. Marshall Slayden IV, Meredith Lee Slayden, and Matthew Slayden; and

WHEREAS, this intrepid warrior of freedom leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in military life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional soldier and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of William M. Slayden, U.S. Army, Retired, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character, his limitless courage, his stalwart commitment to the defense of his nation, and his many contributions to his community and this state.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Col. Slayden.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.